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ABSTRACT

The problem of poor school climate in an eighth- and ninth-grade center was addressed by the implementation of a school climate improvement project. The following are the primary goals of this practicum: (1) improve school attendance; (2) reduce out-of-school suspensions; and (3) improve student and teacher morale. To address these goals, a climate improvement program was designed for an urban school containing 900 students (45% Whites, 43% Blacks, and 11% Hispanic Americans), with the following components: (1) positive incentives for good attendance; (2) teacher empowerment; (3) positive comment logs for teachers; (4) displaying student work; (5) positive notes to parents; (6) Saturday work detail; and (7) after school work detail. Implementation involved teachers, administrators, and other school staff. The climate improvement project reduced out-of-school suspensions by 27%, improved daily attendance by 6%, and improved student and teacher morale. Appendices contain the following: (1) the attendance notification letter; (2) the student-of-the-week nomination form; (3) the lead team invitation letter; (4) the teacher comment log; (5) the Saturday work detail notification form; and (6) the teacher and student motivation questionnaires created for use in the study. Three figures illustrate the discussion. A list of 13 references is included. (SLD)

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IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE IN AN URBAN
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

by

Robert C. Lawson

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advance-
ment of Education at Nova University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National
Database System for reference.

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Signed Robert Hanson

Abstract

Improving School Climate In An Urban Junior High School.
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Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: School Climate/School Culture/Urban Junior High
School/Student Attendance/Positive Student Incentive/Student
Recognition/Alternative to out-of-school Suspensions/Teacher
Empowerment/Site-Based-Decision Making/Student & Teacher
Morale

The problem of poor school climate in an eighth and ninth center was addressed by the implementation of a school climate improvement project. The primary goals of the practicum were to improve school attendance, reduce out-of-school suspensions and to improve student and teacher morale. To address these goals, the author designed and implemented a climate improvement plan, which consisted of positive incentives for good attendance, teacher empowerment, positive comment logs for teachers, displaying student work, positive notes to parents, Saturday work detail, and after school work detail. The implementation involved the assistant principal, teachers, students, parents, lunchroom staff, and custodial staff. Students were encouraged to attend school everyday, the effects of positive comments were discussed with the teachers, alternate forms of punishments were used instead of out-of-school suspensions. The results indicated the climate improvement project reduced out-of-school suspensions by 27 percent, improved the daily attendance by 6 percent and improved both student and teacher morale. Examples of the school improvement plan and other related materials are provided in the appendices. Specifically, appendices include the attendance notification letter, the student of the week nomination form, a copy of the lead team invitation letter, the teacher comment log, Saturday work detail notification form, and teacher and student morale questionnaires created by the author.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

The author of this practicum is a ninth grade pretechnical industrial material and processes secondary school instructor. For 13 years the writer has been involved in education, three years at the senior high level and the remaining 10 at the junior high level.

This study was conducted at the eighth and ninth grade center. The grade configuration resulted from the School Desegregation Order of 1971. The school was constructed in 1963 to house grades seven through nine. The school site is located in an urban area, with many service-related businesses and tourist attractions within one mile of the campus. A low income public housing development within the attendance zone has opened within the past two years. New private apartment complexes cover large tracts in the northern portion of the attendance zone.

The student body consists of 900 students, of which 45 percent are White, 43 percent are Black and 11 percent are Hispanic. Often times these groups are in direct conflict with one another and bring neighborhood problems to school.

The school's attendance areas have an over abundance of lower socioeconomic and transient families with a resulting high crime rate. The role models that many of the students emulate are those of "pushers", "dropouts" and "burnouts". Untold numbers of conferences reveal such family turmoil that many parents cannot help themselves much less the children. For the most part, middle-class values are nonexistent. School records indicate that 60 percent of these students live in single parent homes, 95 percent of that number is headed by females. Printouts from the automatic phone dialers used to contact parents when students are absent indicate that 40 percent of the students' homes have no telephone or numbers that are no longer in service. Many of the families cannot afford this most basic service, making communication between home and school a difficult task.

Many of the students have never experienced academic success. During the 1989-90 school year 145 students did not earn the necessary credits to be passed to the next grade. The school wide grade point average (GPA) of 1.60 indicates that many of the students cannot or will not do the necessary work to become even marginally successful. Students coming from all the feeder schools are deficient in

writing, mathematics and reading as indicated on the eighth grade state assessment test.

Many of the students have legal problems. Fifty-five have Health and Rehabilitation Services (HRS) counselors, which means these students are at least second time criminal offenders. Twelve have probation officers and eight are convicted felons.

Over 50 percent of all classes fall in the basic or compensatory education (CE) category. Only 80 students out of 900 qualify for upper level classes. Sixty-five percent of the students qualify for free or reduced school meals. This is a primary indicator of identifying "at-risk" students.

There were over 1500 out-of-school suspensions during the 1989-90 school year. The target school has the highest expulsion rate for the large metropolitan district, averaging 12 per year. Also, this school has the lowest daily attendance (78 percent) in the district.

The target school, one of 27 secondary schools in the district, offers a wide range of academic, vocational and social programs and has an experienced instructional staff. Thirty-five of the 65 faculty members have advanced degrees and approximately 50 percent of the faculty has 10 or more

years of teaching experience. Despite this, the assistant principals received over 150 teacher generated referrals per week for inappropriate student behavior. Additionally, the students scored below the county, state and national averages on the Stanford Achievement Test of Basic Skills (SAT) compared with other schools in the district.

As a ninth grade pretechnical industrial materials and processes instructor, this author is responsible for teaching prevocational classes to approximately 96 students. These students reflect the general make-up of the school population. Also, this author has noted that there has been a 28 percent turn over rate in the student membership since the beginning of the 1990 -1991 school year. The author has noted that school climate is a serious problem at this school.

Problem Description

School climate, like the climate of any other organization, determines whether the school can achieve excellence or will flounder ineffectively. A school with high levels of disorder, low morale and poor cooperation between teachers and administrators cannot be a good place to learn or teach. Such a school is bound to have a poor public image. It is evident

that students, teachers and administrators need a positive environment in which to learn, teach and manage.

One of the goals for the practicum site school was to decrease the out-of-school suspension rate. The author has analyzed the Dean's cards of all students with five days or more out-of-school suspension (120) and randomly interviewed 33 percent. The author randomly surveyed five assistant principals from other schools. The assistant principals surveyed had an average of 36 students with five or more out of the school suspensions at the end of the first semester. The target school should have had far fewer than 120 students with more than five days of out-of-school suspension. Instead, this number should not have been more than 36. Thus, a discrepancy of 84 students with this number of out-of-school suspensions existed. There was a great need to reduce the rate of out-of-school suspensions. Many students surveyed felt uncared for academically, socially and in terms of physical safety. The overall feeling was that the school really did not care about student well being.

The target school has had a serious attendance problem. Over the last two years to the present, the target school

average daily attendance has been 78 percent. The county wide average for secondary school was 88 percent. The target school average daily attendance should be no less than the county average. A discrepancy of 10 percent existed. There was a need to improve average daily attendance by 10 percent at the target junior high school. In analyzing the attendance records of students during the first semester (1990 - 91), factors which were considered contributors to the high rate of absenteeism were minor illnesses, doctor's appointments, legal problems, family crises, skipping/truancy and the feeling of not belonging or being wanted. It has been observed by the author that the school and some teachers have very little/low expectations for all students.

The student morale from interviews indicated poor morale at the target school, and morale should be high for all students to achieve at the maximum level. Poor student morale could be a direct link between poor attendance and grade point average. The morale problem among teachers limited the number of extra curricular activities for students before and after school because teachers did not as freely volunteer time after school. The intent of this practicum exercise was to improve the overall climate of the target school.

To achieve this improvement in school's climate, the following specific objectives were addressed.

Outcome Objectives

1. After 10 weeks of implementation of the climate improvement project, the target junior high school out-of-school suspension rate would decrease by 15 percent as compared to the previous 10 week out-of-school suspension rate as measured by review of student suspension records.
2. Following 10 weeks of implementation of the improving climate project, the number of students absent each day would decrease from 22 percent to no more than 12 percent as measured by review of daily student attendance records.
3. After 10 weeks of implementation of the climate improvement project, 80 percent of the students responding to the survey would describe student morale as positive or very positive among targeted PALS students as measured by teacher administered survey. PALS students were those 120 students that were initially surveyed. These students had been identified as seriously "at risk" for dropping out of school

4. After 10 weeks of implementation of the climate improvement project, teacher morale would improve at the target school as indicated by overall job satisfaction as measured by teacher administered survey. In other words, 80 percent of the target teachers would report being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their performance on the job.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

An effective school climate is positive attitude exhibited by the entire school staff and student body through behavior that creates a warm, orderly learning environment (Licata, 1987). There is no magic formula to create this climate overnight. Strong leadership is required for administrators to act as role models, set a climate expectation level, and be willing to take the necessary risk to improve climate. Innovative programs must recognize the self-worth of every student. Teachers and support staff members must be cooperative, caring and committed to effective education. And, the school philosophy must state that students are very important people.

The Danforth Foundation conducted a year-long study to evaluate what is being done to improve school attendance throughout the country. The following are examples of the most commonly used methods to enhance school attendance by the school surveyed: rewards for good attendance, home-school contracts, contact with local civic agencies,

punishment for excessive absenteeism and the implementation of a alternative school program (Rodger, 1982).

Information was obtained from a fellow educator who has successfully implemented a behavior modification program designed to boost and encourage attendance. Lawson (1990) suggested a point system which allows students to accumulate merits which would enable students to have free time, library time, snacks and other privileges. Also suggested were a weekly activity hour which is provided for students who have earned points sufficient to participate in a special activity. Very restrictive hall pass privileges, daily attendance reports to parents, and telephone contact with parents of students who have been excessively absent or caught truant from classes were also recommended. The above program was implemented in a middle school in Cleveland, Ohio. The project was underwritten by business sponsors with a goal of improving overall attendance by five percent. This goal was accomplished and community businesses continue to support the project.

It is evident that absenteeism is a wide-spread and serious problem teachers, school officials, and parents must cope with and overcome. The potential negative effects upon

students and the education system greatly undermines the educational goals and responsibilities society has entrusted in schools. It is realistic to assume absenteeism can be reduced through a concerted effort of teachers, parents, administrators, and students through the implementation of an effective behavioral modification and parent involvement program (Karweit, 1985).

Excessive student absenteeism, whether for personal obstacles, excused or unexcused, reduces the amount of time students are exposed to instruction and has been proven to be critical to student decisions of whether to remain in school. Absenteeism has proven to be a negative factor in student achievement. An indication of the consensus concerning the importance of time-on-task is the number of recent legislative actions aimed at increasing time in school or at modifying how schools use existing time. Recent commission reports and studies of time and learning have focused attention on the importance of school time (Karweit, 1985).

All these efforts to increase instructional time mean very little if much of the time already allotted to instruction is lost to absenteeism. Student absences continue to comprise a

major loss of instructional time for thousands of students (Karweit, 1985).

Many school systems now recognize the integral relationship between the student's physical presence and learning. Truant officers and social workers have been assigned to visit homes when pupils are absent without a known cause. However, the teacher frequently holds the direct key to school attendance. It is the teacher who is the role model for pupils, often that of the parent replacement during school. If the student is led to perceive himself or herself as a failure, then school will become a painful experience and failure will lead to more failure (Galloway, 1982).

Teacher Morale

Power has been described as an ugly word, and one that connotes dominance to which people must submit and acquiesce, one person's will at the expense of another person's self-esteem. Yet, power is the ability to control and influence others to work toward the organization mission (Appelbaum and Stimson, 1988).

The concept of power seems strangely foreign to education, a field presumably concerned with communication of knowledge, not the issues of power and influence. De-

scribing a teacher or principal as power hungry or political would seldom be regarded as complimentary. Educators are rarely expected to show the overt use of power in favor of reasonable discourse and other polite techniques. The open use of power is more readily acknowledged in the corporate board rooms or in the halls of Congress than in the classroom or the principal's office.

It is generally believed that effective use of power is widely misunderstood by educators. One source of the difficulty is finite and scarce resources. Those who hold this view tend to see power as involving manipulative, often cut-throat techniques that produce winners and losers, never a middle ground (Appelbaum and Stimson, 1988).

Those who have examined the practices of the nation's most outstanding Fortune 500 businesses have consistently cited the fact that these companies are committed to empowering the workers within the company. Of course, a necessary condition for empowering employees is a willingness on the part of the supervisor to delegate authority and to function as a developer of human potential rather than a giver of orders. Many business leaders believe that empowering employees allows the employees to more productive

and thus, the entire enterprise becomes more successful (Maeroff, 1988).

Teachers throughout the nation must be viewed in a new way. That change in perception can be the beginning of empowerment. The empowerment of teachers is essential if schools are to improve. As long as teachers are not adequately valued by themselves and by others, teachers are not apt to perform with the necessary assurance and authority to do the job as well as possible.

If teachers can be lifted in three areas, each of which complements the other, teachers will be able to discover and flex new muscles. These three areas involve status, knowledge and participation in decision making (Maeroff, 1988).

Effective principals will pay particular attention to the important task of identifying and empowering champions. Empowerment is not simply turning people loose and hoping for the best. Many corporation advocates of empowering the workforce were not laissez-faire leaders. These advocates remained obsessed with outcome. According to McPherson of Dana Corporation, empowerment is supported precisely because it eliminates excuses for failure to perform (McPherson, as cited in Snyder, 1988). People cannot blame

failure on the decisions of others when all persons take an active part in deciding how to complete a task (Snyder, 1988).

Student Morale

Student apathy is a difficult problem to overcome. Low self-esteem is generally the greatest cause for apathy among students. Motivating students has always been a challenge to teachers interested in student achievement. Teachers who have been successful with motivational techniques find many rewarding dividends, and highly motivated students improve academically (Gunning, 1988).

Teachers give criticism twice as often as praise. This problem must be called to teachers' attention and corrected. A good starting point is to have teachers say 10 positive things to students every class period (Taylor, 1989).

Taylor (1989) also made suggestions for improving student morale. A central bulletin board can be used to record students' birthdays each month. Bulletin boards or wall space can also be used for academic, athletic, band and other activity banners each month or to create a central art gallery for displaying student work. Special rewards or events can be sponsored for students that have worked to achieve a

challenging goal. Students could be rewarded with a movie before a holiday or a special dance for higher-than-expected achievement on the state achievement test (Taylor, 1989).

Students and parents appreciate positive letters and notes from teachers and the principal. For some students that letter will be the only one received during the student's school career. Students and parents remember those educators who send positive notes concerning students' achievement and good conduct. Awards assemblies should be scheduled several times a year to honor individuals who have excelled.

Involving students in schoolwide contests provides opportunities to display the students' many talents. Poster contests, bulletin board contests, attendance contests, tardy contests and honor roll contests are but a few. The more involved and recognized the students are, the higher the students' self-esteem and the better the school climate (Taylor, 1989).

Out-of-School Suspension

The word discipline means security for parents, order for teachers and power for administrators. For students, discipline implies a loss of freedom, students' most precious

possession. For some students, discipline produces anger and resentment. For most students, it is a necessary evil to be endured during the adolescent years (Deering, 1989).

No matter how one defines it, discipline is an emotional issue. A disciplinarian who fails to understand the emotion or does not take the time to consider it is essentially abdicating responsibility to help youngsters make each disciplinary action a learning experience. An effective disciplinarian must also be a counselor; however, it is almost impossible to be an effective disciplinarian and counselor when administrators must deal with large student/ administrator ratios (Ornstein, 1989). Therefore, out-of-school suspension is the easiest and quickest way of dealing with unacceptable behavior from students.

With the majority of households now having both parents working, out-of-school suspension has become a mini vacation for many students. A school in Mansfield, Massachusetts, Qualters Middle School, developed a Saturday suspension program as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. When appropriate, students are given the option of a Saturday work program rather than suspension. Students and parents are assured that no record of a suspension will be listed if

all parties agree to the Saturday program and more importantly, no class time will be missed. The Saturday work program is in its third year. The out-of-school suspension rate has been reduced by 59 percent (Hagerty, 1988).

Solution Strategies

From the above research, the author chose several strategies which were used in combination to develop a school climate improvement project. In the area of attendance, three major strategies were used. First, students who were absent were phoned daily as suggested by Lawson (1990). Second, to improve student attendance notification letters were mailed home to parents informing parents of student absence (Lawson, 1990). Finally, positive attention was given to students for good school attendance (Rodger, 1982; Lawson, 1990; Karweit, 1985, Galloway, 1982).

The author surmised that teachers will work even harder in order to achieve the organization mission if teachers have a voice in how decisions are made in the work place. In the areas of teacher morale, two major strategies were used. First, teachers were given the opportunity to serve on the schools' site-based decision making team, and secondly teachers were empowered to make decisions concerning the

total operation of the school (Maeroff, 1988; Appelbaum, 1988; Stimson, 1988; Snyder, 1988).

From the above literature, the author chose three strategies to aid in the improvement of student morale. First, teachers said at least 10 positive things to students each period (Taylor, 1989). Second, to improve student morale a display case was provided to display students' work, homeroom pictures and team information (Taylor, 1989). Finally, positive notes were sent home to parents praising students for academic performance and effort given during the week (Gunning, 1988; Taylor, 1989).

After a complete search of the literature the author chose two major strategies to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions. The students and parents were given the opportunity to serve a Saturday work detail instead of out-of-school suspension (Hagerty, 1988). Hagerty also suggested a daily after school work detail program to reduce the number of students being suspended out-of-school.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Having identified some of the problems of school climate the author designed and implemented a school climate improvement plan. The plan of action centered around four basic areas, which were out-of-school suspensions, daily attendance, and student and faculty morale at the target junior high school. The implementation involved the students, parents, assistant principals, teachers, lunchroom staff, and custodians.

In an effort to monitor the day-by-day progress of the project, the following timeline was followed:

Timeline

Week 1

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents. Invite interested teachers to

serve on site-based management team.

This involves a one year commitment.

Week 2

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents. Pizza party for deserving students.

Week 3

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 4

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone

calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 5

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 6

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents. Pizza party for deserving students.

Week 7

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone

calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 8

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 9

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students' parents.

Week 10

Assembly with students. Consultation with students, teachers, and administrators. Daily positive comment logs. Daily after school work detail as needed. Saturday work detail as needed. Phone calls and letters to absent students'

parents. Administer student and teacher morale questionnaire. Analyze results.

To explain the various phases of the implementation, this discussion is divided into the following subsections: pre-implementation, implementation, attendance, out-of-school suspension, student morale, teacher morale, resources and evaluation.

Pre-implementation

The pre-implementation phase involved discussing the climate improvement project with the teachers and the assistant principal to get suggestions and recommendations to improve the project. Follow-up formal and informal meetings were held to fine tune the program prior to implementation. In addition, pre-implementation or internship activities were conducted which included researching school climate and its related topics, consulting other experts in educational leadership positions and visiting other sites which were known to have improved their school climate.

Implementation

Implementation of the program began with each homeroom teacher discussing the project with the students. The Pro-

gram for Alternative Learning Skills (PALS) elected to hold a general assembly to introduce the program. The author and assistant principal served as chairpersons.

Attendance

Students who were absent were contacted by the automatic phone dialer each day they were absent. Students without home phones were mailed postcards or letters. Information from the automatic dialer indicated an average of 144 calls were made each night. This number represents 16 percent of the school's population. Students who were absent six or more times were mailed an excessive absence notification letter (Appendix A:43). Students who improved in the areas of attendance were given positive reinforcements like student of the week (Appendix B:45), pizza parties, bowling parties, gift certificates, and an attendance breakfast.

Out-of-School Suspension

As an alternative to out-of-school suspension, two strategies were used to reduce the number of students suspended from school: Saturday Work Detail program and After School Work Detail program (Appendix E:51). Students were assigned to work programs by the PALS team leader and the assistant principals. There were 286 students assigned to

the program during the 10 week period. Two hundred fifty-one or 80 percent of the students showed up and successfully passed the work detail. Teachers with first and sixth period conference periods were asked to supervise the work details along with the author and assistant principals. The teachers received no additional pay; however teachers were given 'comp' time which could be used as deemed necessary.

Student Morale

Implementation of the student morale portion required three areas. Randomly chosen teachers selected one student and an alternate student to maintain a daily log (Appendix D:49) of positive and negative comments made to students by the teachers. Eighty percent of the teachers said positive things to students on a daily basis. The author noticed that those teachers who spoke negatively to students wrote more referrals than those who said positive things to students. Teachers gave positive class notes for student behavior, attendance, class work and homework completion. Students and teachers maintained a centrally located display case where homeroom pictures, student work and updates were displayed. This display case was changed every week at the

suggestion of the students. The author had originally planned to change the display case only twice during the implementation.

Teacher Morale

Teachers were empowered and asked to take command of the classrooms. Teachers were also encouraged to run for elected positions on the school's lead team/steering committee. The committee along with the principal and assistant principals shared ideas and decisions to educate students and to manage the overall school. Listed below is a typical agenda of a lead team meeting.

1. Opening/Meeting Objectives
2. Committee Reports
 - Hall passes
 - Faculty/Staff fishing trip
 - Recommendations as to the spreading of the General Telephone Award monies (\$12,000)
3. School wide discipline report
4. School wide incentive program
5. Program for Alternative Learning Skills statistical information

6. New business
7. Announcement
8. Adjournment

Teacher morale has greatly improved since the conception of the site-based decision making committee was established. There is now a feeling of 'WE' and not 'THEM' at the school.

Resources

Costs incurred during the pre-implementation and implementation phases of the practicum amounted to approximately \$3,000.00. Charges were for paper, posters, postage, phone line, attendance breakfast, gift certificates, pizza parties, bowling parties and other incentives. Many incentives were provided free of charge by area businesses.

Personnel included the principal, assistant principals, 60 teachers, the author, two clerks, lunchroom personnel and the custodial staff. Time contributions ranged from four hours (clerk typist), to 12 hours (PALS teachers). The author spent approximately 100 hours during the pre-implementation and implementation phases of the practicum. The target school provided the use of three computers (Apple, IBM and Macintosh) and needed software.

Evaluation

The practicum was evaluated on an on-going basis by the author. The print-out from the automatic phone dialer was monitored on a daily basis; notification letters for excessive absences were checked weekly; the out-of-school suspension log books were checked daily; positive and negative teacher comments logs were checked weekly. Students were assigned after school work detail and Saturday work detail which were supervised daily. Feedback was given via teacher concern/suggestion form, to the lead team daily. Teachers could also voice concerns in person at any lead/steering committee meeting. Due to some positive feedback from teachers the author made one adjustment after the second week. Student assemblies were discontinued in order to minimize disruptions of class time. All information planned for general assemblies was shared by the homeroom teachers.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The overall purpose of this project was to improve school climate at the target junior high school. Four specific factors were selected from the body of research having to do with school climate. These factors were out-of-school suspension, student attendance, student morale and teacher morale. Each of these factors was addressed during the implementation phase of this project.

Objective one was to reduce the number of out-of-school suspension by 15 percent during the implementation of the climate improvement project. This objective was evaluated by comparing the number of students suspended out-of-school 10 weeks prior to implementation and during the 10 weeks of implementation of the project. Prior to implementation there were 375 students suspended out-of-school, after the implementation there were 275 out-of-school suspensions. This represents a reduction in out-of-school suspension of 27 percent, therefore this objective was accomplished. Figure 1 shows the number of students suspended weeks 1 - 5 and weeks 6 - 10 prior to implementation. Figure 1:31 also

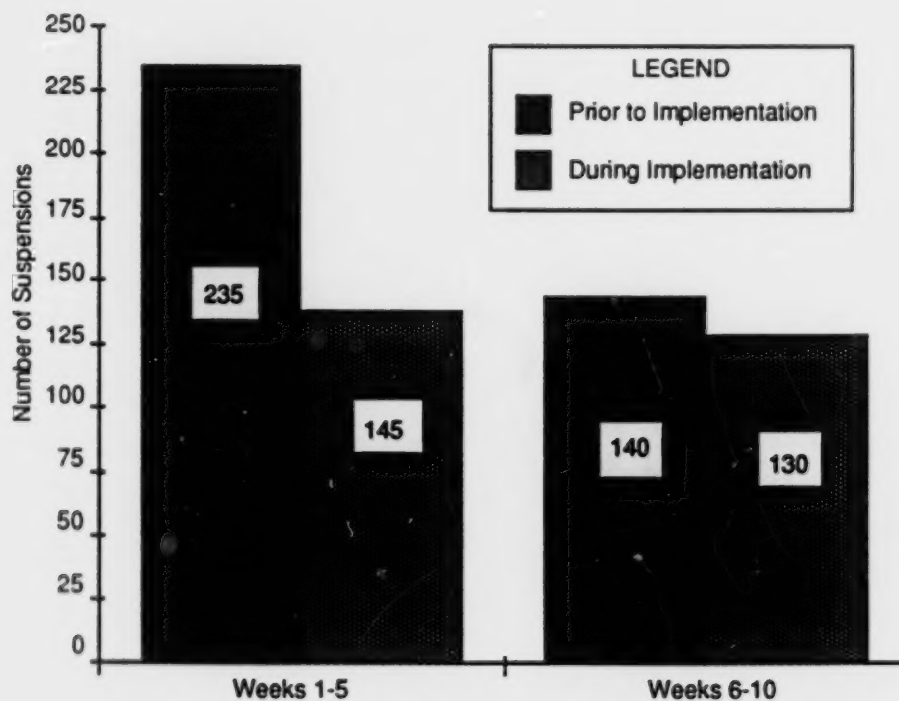


Figure 1

Represents the Frequency of Out-of-School Suspensions
Before and After the Implementation of the
Climate Improvement Project

shows the numbers of students suspended weeks 1 - 5 and weeks 6 - 10 during the implementation.

Objective two focused on improving school wide attendance from 78 percent to 88 percent. The latter figure represents the county wide average for secondary school. This objective was evaluated by analyzing the daily attendance bulletin which noted the number of students absent each and every day. The target school had an average of 144 students absent each day. Objective two was not attained, but the target school made a giant step toward improving school wide attendance for the 1991 - 1992 school year. Objective two was missed by four points, the average daily attendance for the 10 weeks of implementation represented an increase of six percent (to 84 percent) which missed the stated objective but resulted in a positive gain. Many of the students have a history of poor school attendance, therefore it will take a longer period of time for these students to recognize the correlation between good attendance and academic achievement.

Objective three centered around student morale, in the Program for Alternative Learning Skills (PALS). This objective was measured by a Likert type questionnaire, where

no validity or reliability had previously been established. One hundred one of 116 student questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions with five possible responses. Eighty-four percent of the students questioned responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the 20 questions asked. Figure 2:34 shows the students' response to each question in great detail. If 80 percent of PALS students responded positively, objective three would be met. Eight-four percent of PALS students responded positively, therefore objective three was attained. The author became interested in the perception of students outside of the PALS program, therefore 250 non PALS students were given the questionnaire. Seventy percent of the non 'sheltered' students indicated their satisfaction with the school as "positive" or "very positive". This leads the author to believe that the extra incentives given to PALS students such as positive notes, positive comments, display areas and other incentives made a substantial difference in the way the PALS students responded (84 percent versus 70 percent).

Objective four was concerned with teacher morale. The goal was that 80 percent of the teachers surveyed would respond "satisfied" or "very satisfied" as measured by the

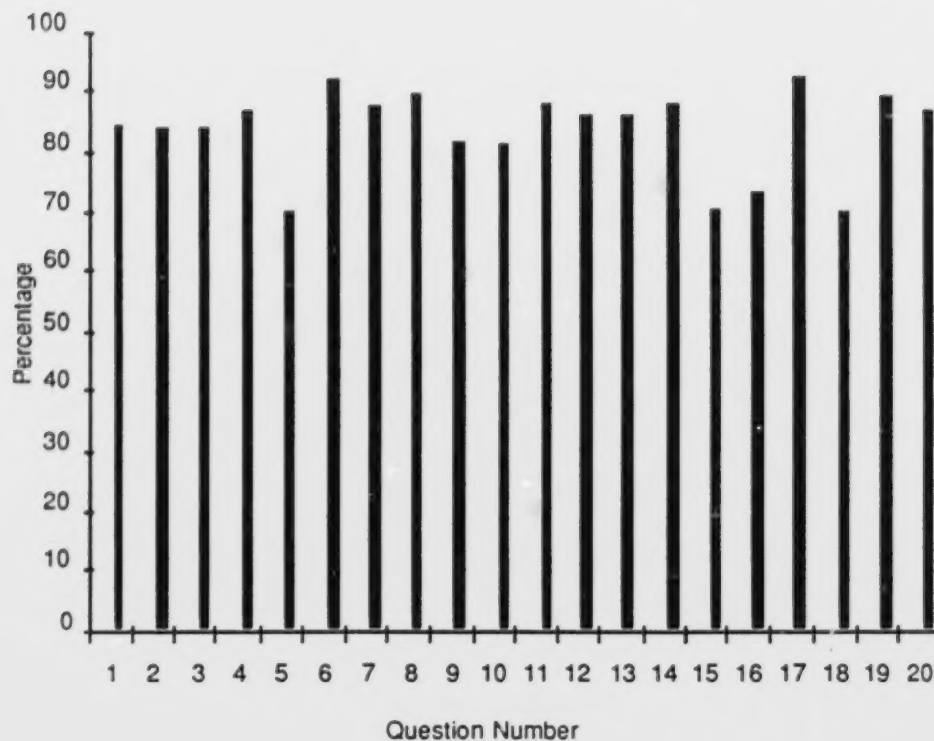
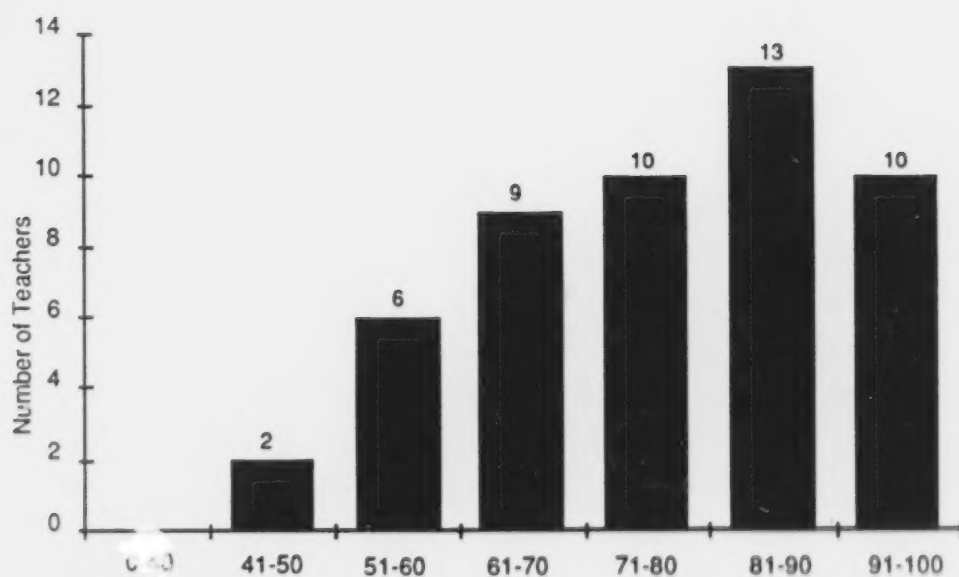


Figure 2
Number of Students by Question, Who Responded "Agree,"
or "Strongly Agree" on the Student Climate Morale
Survey Overall Student Rating 84%

teacher morale survey. This questionnaire was a Likert type, 20 question survey with five possible answers. Three different teachers distributed and collected the surveys during an extended lunch period. Forty-nine teachers out of 60 completed the survey. The goal of 80 percent was not attained; however, it was nearly attained. Seventy-six percent of the teachers surveyed responded 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. Figure 3:36 graphically shows the wide range of scores as reported by the teachers. There were eight low scores ranging from 41 - 60 out of a possible 100 points. There were 23 high to very high scores. The eight extreme low scores lowered the overall percentage. The eight low scores indicated there are a few very dissatisfied teachers at the target school.

Since the inception of the school climate improvement project, administrators and teachers became sensitive to factors that influenced school climate. During the course of this project the following improvements were made: new classroom furniture, new grass, upgraded landscaping, new mini blinds, electronic digital sign, new marquee, mounted televisions in each classroom and a new faculty dining room. The overall school climate has been improved as a result of



Distribution of Survey Scores by Teachers

Figure 3
Frequency of Scores Indicated by The
Teacher Climate Morale Survey

a reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions, improved average daily attendance and improved student/teacher morale.

Students kept positive/negative teacher comment logs during the implementation of this project. Sixteen teachers were systematically selected to participate. All selected teachers agreed to have students record the number of positive and negative student comments made during class by the teacher. Each teacher selected a student to record. Percentages of positive and negative comments were tabulated for each teacher. Teachers were rated as being positive on an overall basis if 80 percent of teacher comments were positive. Nine of the 16 teachers made positive student remarks at least 80 percent of the time. The remaining seven teachers made positive comments at the following rate during the 10 week implementation: 78 percent, 74 percent, 72 percent, 65 percent, two teachers at 62 percent and 32 percent. The overall rating was 79.56 percent positive comments as opposed to negative comments. At least three of these teachers made a significant number of negative student comments. One teacher (62 percent) failed an entire

class of 35 students. One teacher (32 percent positive comments) wrote 198 behavior referrals (excluding tardies).

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Most educators would agree that it is difficult to create positive working and learning conditions in the school environment. This is a major source of discouragement for educational leaders.

The results of this practicum will first be shared during pre-planning of 1991 - 1992 school year with interested school and community persons. This practicum will be shared with other schools and educators that are interested in solving poor school climate. This program could easily be adjusted to suit elementary or high school students and teachers. The success of the program will depend, in part, on the support and commitment of the students, teachers and administrators involved.

Specific recommendations when using this program would involve the delivery of incentives. This project provided some incentives every two weeks, this time span is too long. Better results could be obtained by providing incentives daily or weekly. It is also recommended that consideration should be given to the amount of time required by the PALS teachers and the author.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Attendance Notification Letter

Appendix A

Target Junior High School

Attendance Notice

To the Parent or Guardian of:

According to our records your child has been absent from school for six (6) days during this grading period. School Board Policy requires that parents be notified when students have been absent a total of six days. If you have cleared these absences by note, phone call, or conference, you do not need to contact the school. If these absences have not been cleared, we will be happy to discuss them with you.

The dates of the absences are:

Poor attendance or excessive tardies may result in a low or failing grade in a course. Please contact one of the Assistant Principals, and we will be happy to further clarify the matter with you.

Sincerely,

Assistant Principal

Phone number

Appendix B
Student of the Week Notification Form

Appendix B

Super Pirate of the Week Nomination

Name_____

Grade_____

Reason for the Nomination_____

Teacher Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix C
Lead Team Invitation Letter

Appendix C
Target Junior High School

To: Faculty
From: The Principal

The faculty vote by secret ballot to explore Site-Based Decision Making has been completed. The results of that election are as follows:

50 voted Yes	- 78.1%
14 voted No	- 21.9%
6 did not vote	

100.0%

As per the announcement at Tuesday's faculty meeting, any faculty member wishing to stand for election for the LEAD team should see the book-keeper before you leave today. It should be noted that all planning is done on non-school time and in the past has involved selected Saturdays.

Appendix D
Teacher Positive/Negative Comment Log

Appendix D

Teacher Positive/Negative Comment Log

Teacher's Name						Date			
Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Period 4		Period 5	
P*	N*	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	4	9
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

* P = Positive

* N = Negative

Select a student and an alternate per period to record data

Appendix E
Saturday Work Detail Notification Letter

Appendix E
Target Junior High School
Saturday Work Detail

The Saturday Work Program at the Target Junior High School has been developed as an administrative alternative to some of the more standard disciplinary consequences. If the school administration deems it appropriate they may offer attendance at the Saturday Work Program as an alternative to other disciplinary action. If the parent and student accept the Saturday Work Program they will sign below indicating that they understand and agree with the conditions.

1. Students are to be at the front of the Media Center at 8:00 a.m., students who are late will not be allowed into the program. Students will be dismissed at the same door at 11:00 a.m.
2. Students will do light cleaning, such as washing desks, lockers, windows; raking leaves, picking up paper; etc., under the supervision of a school employee.
3. Any student who misbehaves or refuses to follow the reasonable directives of the supervisor will be sent home immediately.

4. Any student who fails to show up for the program or is sent home from the program will face the disciplinary consequence that was offered as the alternative to the Saturday Work Program.

I have read the above statements and I accept these terms, and will be present on Saturday, _____.

Student Signature

I have read the above statements and I accept these terms. I will do all that I can to ensure that my child is cooperative in the program.

Parent Signature

Appendix F
Teacher Morale Questionnaire

Appendix F

Teacher Climate Morale Survey

Please circle one number to indicate your response. Please do not include your name on this form.

- 5 Strongly agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

1. Am I trusted by my supervisor?

5 4 3 2 1

2. Do my superiors have confidence in me?

5 4 3 2 1

3. Do my superiors have confidence in my abilities and talents?

5 4 3 2 1

4. Can I trust my superiors?

5 4 3 2 1

5. Are my opinions and comments valued?

5 4 3 2 1

6. Are my ideals perceived as being worthwhile?

5 4 3 2 1

7. Are levels and positions of no importance when suggestions for improvements are made?

5 4 3 2 1

8. Am I able to make a real contribution to the over all school?
5 4 3 2 1
9. Is my input needed and accepted?
5 4 3 2 1
10. Is input from all teachers important?
5 4 3 2 1
11. Are new projects and ideals discussed with all faculty members?
5 4 3 2 1
12. Is my involvement sincerely needed and valued?
5 4 3 2 1
13. Is empowerment another one of those fads - "this to shall pass"?
5 4 3 2 1
14. Does the lead team agree with everything put forth by the administration?
5 4 3 2 1
15. Are staff development workshops open to all faculty and staff?
5 4 3 2 1
16. Has my building supervisor encouraged me to increase my academic skills?
5 4 3 2 1
17. Do I basically feel good about the overall school?
5 4 3 2 1
18. Is pride within the teaching ranks present?
5 4 3 2 1

19. Is knowledge of ones subject matter shared among teachers?

5 4 3 2 1

20. Is there caring and sharing among teachers?

5 4 3 2 1

Appendix G
Student Morale Questionnaire

Appendix G

Student Climate Morale Survey

Please circle one number to indicate your response. Please do not include your name on this form.

- 5 Strongly agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

1. I am respected and trusted by adults at this school?

5 4 3 2 1

2. Do teachers generally have confidence in me?

5 4 3 2 1

3. Do teachers encourage me to be successful?

5 4 3 2 1

4. Is there at least one adult at my school in which I can confide?

5 4 3 2 1

5. Is my personal opinion important to my school?

5 4 3 2 1

6. Are my rights and privileges protected?

5 4 3 2 1

7. Am I free from harassment by other students?

5 4 3 2 1

8. Do I feel safe in the hall, restroom, classroom and lunchroom?

5 4 3 2 1

9. Is my personal property respected by other students?

5 4 3 2 1

10. Is my involvement in school activities encouraged?

5 4 3 2 1

11. Are all students encouraged to participate in co-curriculum activities?

5 4 3 2 1

12. Are all students encouraged to participate in extra-curriculum activities?

5 4 3 2 1

13. Is involvement of all students encouraged during class?

5 4 3 2 1

14. Are expectation set for all students?

5 4 3 2 1

15. Have rewards and incentives improved my overall feeling about my school?

5 4 3 2 1

16. Is social and academic growth encouraged by faculty members?

5 4 3 2 1

17. Am I encouraged to "stretch" academically?

5 4 3 2 1

18. Overall, do I feel good about my school?

5 4 3 2 1

19. Overall, do I feel teachers and administrators care about my well being?

5 4 3 2 1

20. Do teachers on a daily basis make positive comments, indicating they do care?

5 4 3 2 1